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March 11, 2026

To: The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama  
Chair, Economic Matters Committee

From: Kira Wilpone-Welborn, Assistant Attorney General  
Consumer Protection Division

Re: House Bill 1548 – Real Property - Residential Lease - Terminology (Letter of Concern)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General (the “Division”) has concerns about House Bill 1548 sponsored by Delegates Sean Stinnett and Gary Simmons. House Bill 1548 would replace the term “landlord” with “rental property owner” and “tenant” with “resident” throughout the entire Annotated Code. However, House Bill 1548’s attempt to modernize the code could result in unintended retractions of rights and obligations.

House Bill 1548’s proposal to swap “landlord” with “rental property owner” could limit rights and obligations of landlords and tenants within the rental property space. For example, the Real Property Article § 8-208 presently provides that any landlord that offers for lease five or more rental units provide a written lease to each tenant. However, House Bill 1548 would provide only a “rental property owner who offers 5 or more dwelling units for rent in the State may not rent a residential dwelling unit without using a written lease.” Although this may seem to be a distinction without a difference, the proposed swap of “landlord” for “rental property owner” could limit which tenants/residents must be provided a written lease when distinct owners (such as through individually named LLCs) own the underlying properties; instead of when landlords or property management companies lease multiple units.

Additionally, House Bill 1548’s swap of “landlord” for “rental property owner” could create redundancies. For example, Public Safety § 9-106 requires a landlord or property owner to provide and maintain smoke alarms. However, if House Bill 1548 were to pass, this section would now provide “rental property owner or property owner is responsible for the installation,

repair, maintenance, and replacement of smoke alarms required by this subtitle.” Further, as with the above, this change could also limit the requirements and responsibilities of owner agents, such as property management companies. As such, House Bill 1548’s proposed terminology creates an unnecessary and confusing redundancy within the code that undermines the code’s intent.

For these reasons, the Division has concerns that House Bill 1548 will have unintended consequences that could impact the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants.

cc: The Honorable Sean Stinnett  
The Honorable Gary Simmons  
Members, Economic Matters Committee